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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the conditions under which computer-mediated communication (CMC) (electronic mail) senders were perceived as self-absorbed by CMC receivers. Experience with electronic mail was the independent variable and perceived self-absorption, attraction, and homophily were the dependent variables. Two-hundred fifty volunteers from a small private university in the northeast and with varying degrees of computer experience were asked to answer electronic mail messages. Although assertions have been made that CMC messages are likely to reflect an egocentric-like sender because of the limited social context cues the medium offers, results indicated that neither group focused on the lack of these cues. Both experienced and inexperienced electronic mail users perceived the sender of the message as not self-absorbed. Future research should address the issue of whether receivers made a "logical leap" into a frame where reciprocity and very self-oriented communication is accepted or even expected. If a leap was made, researchers should also try to discover how those without any prior experience with the medium made this leap so easily. (Thirty-six references are included; three appendixes, containing the electronic mail messages, are attached.) (PRA)

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Computer-Mediated Communication and Interpersonal Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

An assertion has been made that computer mediated messages are likely to reflect a self-absorbed (egocentric-like) sender because of the limited social context cues the medium offers (Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & McGuire, 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). This study determines whether computer-mediated communication (CMC) senders are perceived as self-absorbed by CMC receivers. Experience with electronic mail was the independent variable and perceived self-absorption, attraction, and homophily were the dependent variables. The results indicated that neither group focused on the lack of social context cues. Therefore experienced and inexperienced electronic mail users perceived the sender of the electronic mail message as not self-absorbed.

Computer-Mediated Communication and Interpersonal Perceptions.

Early research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) focused on technical aspects of information exchange (Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & McGuire, 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). Scholars and practitioners, however, have increasingly come to recognize the importance of CMC for initiating and maintaining interpersonal relationships in complex organizations (Hellerstein, 1986b; Steinfield, 1986; Rice, 1987; Rice & Blair, 1984; Rice & Case, 1987). These developments are particularly significant in light of the link between durable interpersonal relationships in organizations and innovation (Kanter, 1983), morale (Cheney, 1983), and productivity (Goldhaber, 1986). If as some argue, CMC becomes a primary means through which organizational members initiate and conduct interpersonal relationships, it is crucial that we begin analyzing interpersonal relationships conducted via CMC.

A theoretical point of departure to investigate computer-mediated interpersonal relationships and organizational behavior revolves around impression management and the crucial role of identity formation in initiating and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1989; Knapp, 1984). Impression formation and management is especially active in those relationships in which participants have sparse prior knowledge about one another. This is consistent with Berger's (1987; Berger & Calabrese, 1975) uncertainty reduction theory, in that actors use their impressions of others in interpersonal relationships to reduce uncertainty. If the sender is perceived as more concerned with sending messages than receiving them, the sender may be labeled self-absorbed by the receiver. Such labels can constrain the development of shared meanings within dyads, thus reducing communication effectiveness between partners. The key term is perception. The behavioral attributes of self-absorption only function if a receiver perceives a sender to be self-absorbed.

This paper departs from previous studies of interpersonal CMC that have studied self-absorption from a content analytic perspective (Danowski, 1982; Siegel, et al., 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986) and investigates conditions under which senders are perceived as self-absorbed by receivers. In turn, the effects of self-absorption on communication are addressed. The paper provides a brief overview of CMC, explicates the theoretical orientation and research questions concerning perceptions of self-absorption, describes the procedures to test these questions, present the findings, and discuss the implications for CMC.

Computer-Mediated Communication

CMC is an electronic messaging system that allows the transfer of text to people via a computer console. Currently, CMC is used as a communication medium in business and education (Steinfield, 1986; Rice & Blair, 1984; Rice, 1987; Komsky, 1988a; Komsky, 1988b) as well as by many "home" users (Hellerstein, 1986a). This new communication medium brings opportunities to users by allowing communication without regard to time and space constraints. For example, one could use CMC to work with someone in Tokyo almost as easily as if they were in the same building via a company network or BITNET. Communication can easily take place at different times and places because senders control when messages are sent and receivers control when they are received.

Content Analysis

The content analytic perspective focuses on the structural characteristics of computer-mediated messages (Siegel, et al., 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986). Sproull and Kiesler report several means for analyzing messages: average length of messages, 12.6 lines; average number of words in the opening, 0.31; average number of words in the closing, 0.94; average number of politeness instances, 0.46; etc. (p. 1503). They go on to generalize that computer-mediated messages are self-absorbed because of structural characteristics of the messages and estimates of the amount and type of messages CMC users send and receive.

There is no argument that CMC lacks social context cues (Fowler & Wackerbarth, 1980; Hiemstra, 1982; Rice & Love, 1987; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Williams, 1978) and that messages do contain self-absorbed content. The contention is that such content does not necessarily result in self-absorbed perceptions of the senders. The content of a message in CMC is unique to the medium so the inference is that content level meaning is also unique to the medium. Thus, relational-level meaning (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967) should not be unique to the medium; rather, relational level meaning should be consistent over media. Hiemstra (1982) states, "A question that may be raised is whether differences in perception result from purely surface differences, such as in the number of words, or from a difference that may be described, metaphorically at least, as existing in the deep structure of the language characteristic of mediated interactions" (p. 883). Thus, the pivotal relation is not whether CMC messages are self-absorbed but whether the sender of the message is perceived as self-absorbed during interaction.

Interactive Approach

Perception is approached from an interactive or social psychological perspective, where the concept of self-absorption is investigated from the receiver. Specifically, uncertainty reduction theory (Berger, 1987; Berger & Calabrese, 1975) is used to illustrate the limited relation between message structure and actual perceptions of the sender as a self-absorbed communicator. The structure of the message is associated with the norms appropriate for CMC but relationship development is governed by higher order norms of human interaction. Therefore, the content and the structure of the message should not be the only indicator of the relational level meaning of the message. Three areas explicated to illustrate the limit of message structure on actual interpersonal perceptions are: (1) language, (2) interpersonal attraction, and (3) interpersonal homophily.

Language

Bernstein (1971, 1981) indicates language is directly related to the environment. Therefore the CMC receiver's perception of the sender should not be effected by the message's structure or number of personal pronouns in the message. The language codes and structure of the message should be interpreted concurrently the CMC environment not on a content or relational level. The experienced CMC user should receive messages in this manner and begin to reduce uncertainty in the ensuing interpersonal relationship by forming impressions based entire CMC experience.

Attraction and Homophily

Characteristics of interpersonal relationships are used to explore CMC receivers' perceptions of the sender of electronic messages. The theory of uncertainty reduction indicates that when one is involved in an interpersonal relationship one will work to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability (Berger, 1987; Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Two important elements that aid in uncertainty reduction and contribute to the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships are perceived attraction and perceived homophily (McCroskey, Richmond, & Daly, 1975; McCroskey & Richmond, 1979; Prisbell, 1978; Rogers & Bhowmik, 1970; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). Because the computer is a new and prevalent medium for interpersonal communication the dynamics of the receivers' perceptions of the sender of an electronic message need to be investigated. Thus, Sproull & Kiesler's (1986) concept of self-absorption will be investigated and developed from the receivers' perspective along with perceived attraction and perceived homophily.

The concept of attraction must be explored within the context of CMC and the receiver's perceptions of the sender because attraction is innate to human existence and therefore essential to computer-mediated relationships (Berscheid & Walster, 1969). Berscheid and Walster discuss the foundations of

interpersonal attraction and explain that evaluation is one of the most basic of human tendencies. Such appraisal of behavior is the basis for how individuals choose and maintain interpersonal relationships. Thus, perceptions of attraction affect uncertainty reduction demands investigation in the realm of CMC and the receiver's perceptions of the sender.

Research questions

Several variables and research questions related to the effects of CMC on receivers' perceptions can be derived from the above discussion. Hiltz and Turoff (1981), and Rice and Case's (1983) report that socioemotional content depends on experience and familiarity with the CMC system. Therefore, if socioemotional content increases with the level of experience, it is logical to assume that low experienced receivers' perceptions of the sender must be different from high experienced receivers' perceptions of the sender because of the inexperienced receivers naivete with the norms and the lack of social context cues available. The independent variable is the experience level of the receiver and the dependent variables are perceived self-absorption, perceived attraction, and perceived homophily. The following research questions result:

(1) Do high, moderate, and low experienced CMC users differ in their perceptions of the self-absorption of the sender of an electronic mail message?

(2) Do high, moderate, and low experienced CMC users differ in their perceptions of attraction toward the sender of an electronic mail message?

(3) Do high, moderate, and low experienced CMC users differ in their perceptions of homophily toward the sender of an electronic mail message?

Method

Independent Variables

An experience measure was developed by the author (see Appendix A) to

determine frequency of computer use and frequency of electronic mail use (high, moderate, and low). The instrument consists of thirteen items and uses a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from regularly to never. Six items were used to measure the dimension of type of electronic mail user and ten items to measure type of computer user.

The experience scale data were subjected to principle components factor analysis with oblique rotation. The solution produced three factors meeting the 1.0 eigen-value criterion. Three dimensions were extracted accounting for 72.8 percent of the variance. Items with large loadings (.60 as minimum limit) were selected to form the three dimensions. The dimensions were labeled "electronic mail experience" (EXPMAIL); "general computer experience" (CMPUSE); and "advanced computer use" (ADVUSE). Electronic mail experience relates to how often *Ss* use CMC; general computer experience indicates how often *Ss* use a computer (i.e. "I use the computer for word processing regularly" or "I use some function of the computer fairly often"); and advanced computer use reflects how often *Ss* use the computer to write programs or enter data. The reliability coefficients for the dimensions were .93 for "electronic mail experience"; .86 for "general computer use"; and .71 for "advanced computer use."

The message subject matter and structure was varied to reduce response bias. Because the content or structure of the message alone may cause the receiver to respond positively or negatively, four different messages were used. Two message topics were used (see appendix C & D), interpersonal relationships and computer-mediated communication, with two message styles, message Ia and Ic vary in structure from IIa and IIc by the use of an opening, a closing, and paragraphs. All four messages are designed to be from a person of relatively equal status (college student) to eliminate a status bias.

Message Ia and Ic are designed with regard to Sproull and Kiesler's (1986) conceptualization of a self-absorbed message. The message is written in typical

electronic mail fashion without an opening, without a closing, and as one paragraph [my addition]. The content involves a student's views on the possible uses of CMC for the reader. In regard to personal pronouns Ia has 10 "I's" and 4 "my's" in 20 lines and Ic has 13 "I's" and 5 "my's" in 18 lines.

Message IIa and IIc are written with an opening, a closing, and paragraphs to separate ideas. The content of message IIa and IIc is identical with message Ia and IIc respectively. Message IIa contains almost the same number of personal pronouns, 10 "I's" and 5 "my's" as message Ia, and it has 22 lines. Message IIc has 13 "I's" and 6 "my's" in 20 lines.

A computer program was created to randomly choose a message to be sent over an emulated electronic mail system to the Ss. The program replicated logging on to a Digital Equipment Corporation, Micro Vax from a personal computer (PC) via a modem. The set up created the illusion that the computer was on-line with the Vax via a modem.

Dependent Measures

Interpersonal attraction was measured by the McCroskey and McCain's (1974) interpersonal attraction scale. This scale consists of three dimensions: physical attraction, social attraction, and task attraction. The five items measuring physical attraction were not used for this investigation because Ss do not see the target person. Acceptable reliability estimates of .76 for social attraction, and .77 for task attraction were obtained.

Perceived homophily has been defined as a multi-dimensional construct assessing perceived similarity between people along the dimensions of attitude, background, value and appearance (McCroskey, et al., 1975). The perceived homophily scale data were subjected to principle components factor analysis with oblique rotation and a four factor solution was not produced. Therefore, the scale was treated as unidimensional with a reliability estimate of .67.

The author developed a measure of self-absorption (see Appendix B). The

scale is nine items and uses a 5-point Likert type scale that ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The perceived self-absorption scale data were also subjected to factor analysis and produced three factors. The three factors accounted for 54.3 percent of the variance. The dimensions were labeled "self-absorption" (SLFABS); "concern for other" (OTHER); and "impression" (IMPRES). The dimension of self-absorption (SLFABS) indicates a sender who is perceived as an egocentric communicator by the receiver. The concern for other (OTHER) dimension indicates a sender who is perceived by the receiver as a person generally aware of and concerned about the receiver. The IMPRES dimension, indicates the electronic message receivers' perception of the senders' concern for how the receiver is affected by the message. Alpha for SLFABS was .63; .55 for OTHER; and .44 for IMPRES. The low alpha in the OTHER and IMPRES factors are most likely due to the limited number of items (3 and 2 respectively) in the dimensions rather than the lack of internal consistency.

Procedures

The PC was positioned in a student lounge during peak occupancy time, 11:00 a.m. to 4 p.m. This position was used to acquire a variety of low, moderate, and high experienced Ss. The same computer set up was also positioned in a computer user branch to acquire mostly high and moderate experienced Ss. In exchange for a chocolate bar 250 (156 males and 93 females) volunteers from a small private university in the northeast participated in this research.

Once a student agreed to participate, the Ss read a script that described what they would be asked to do. Then they followed an outline to "log on" and receive electronic mail. Lastly, Ss completed the measures packet. Ss were randomly assigned to one of the four message conditions by the randomizer built into the computer program. Each subject received only one message.

Statistical Analysis

This study used a 3x2x2 factorial design with experience (low, moderate,

and high), message format (no opening, closing, or paragraph vs. opening, closing, and paragraphs) and message content (computer-mediated communication vs. interpersonal relationships) by attraction, homophily, and self-absorption. Analysis of variance tests were computed to examine three research questions using alpha level $p<.05$. High power was found for a large and medium effect and moderate power was found for a small effect.

Results

Message Effects. To examine possible sources of extraneous variance, a three-way ANOVA with experience dimensions, message content, and message format as independent variables revealed no significant main effect for message content or format on homophily, task attraction, social attraction, or the two dimensions of self-absorption (SLFABS & IMPRES). There was a significant effect for message content on the concern for other (OTHER) dimension against electronic mail experience (EXPMAIL) ($F=5.06$; $d.f.=3, 243$; $p<.05$) accounting for 5% of the shared variance. The mean for OTHER with the interpersonal message was 3.13 and 2.28 for the CMC message. There was also significant effect between message content on OTHER using general computer use (CMPUSE by MESS $F=12.72$; $d.f.=1, 247$; $p<.05$) and advanced computer use (ADVUSE by MESS $F=13.88$, $d.f.=2, 249$; $p<.05$) as independent variables. The OTHER mean by CMPUSE on the CMC message was 2.81 and 3.13 for the interpersonal message, and OTHER by ADVUSE on the CMC message was 2.79 and 3.14 for the interpersonal message.

Question One. Do high, moderate, and low experienced CMC users differ in their perceptions of the self-absorption of the sender of an electronic mail message? Contrary to what was expected, neither the low or the high experienced electronic mail users perceived the sender of the message as self-absorbed.

A one-way ANOVA approaches significant difference between levels of electronic mail use (EXPMAIL) and self-absorption (SLFABS). There was no significant difference between EXPMAIL and impression (IMPRES). No significant

difference between level of EXPMAIL and OTHER was found with a two-way ANOVA. As previously discussed in the message effects section, a significant difference was revealed between OTHER and MESS ($F=12.95$; d.f.=1, 243; $p<.05$). In this run the high group consisted of Ss who reported regular or fairly often use of electronic mail, the middle group used electronic mail rarely or occasionally, and the low group never used electronic mail. Electronic mail use was divided in the manner described prior because plus and minus one standard deviation ($M=1.91$ $SD=1.19$) leaves an upper limit of less than 1 (the minimum possible score).

One-way ANOVAs using general computer use (CMPUSE) and advanced computer use (ADVUSE) by self-absorption (SLFABS) and impression (IMPRES) revealed no significant differences. Two-way ANOVAs for CMPUSE and ADVUSE by concern for other (OTHER) and message content produced no significant differences. To determine groups for prior two tests the mean plus and minus one standard deviation was attempted for both. For the dimension of advanced computer use this method worked well. But for the dimension of general computer use M 3.95 & s.d.=1.06 produces a value off the scale, 5.01, so a mean split procedure was used to make high and low general computer use groups.

Question Two. Do high, moderate and low experienced CMC users differ in their perceptions of attraction toward the sender of an electronic mail message?

Research question two was best answered, no. There was no significant difference between levels of electronic mail experience (EXPUSE) and social or task attraction. No significant difference between levels of general computer experience (CMPUSE) and social attraction or task attraction was found. There was no significant difference between levels of advanced computer experience and social or task attraction.

Question Three. Do high, moderate, and low experienced CMC users differ in their perceptions of homophily toward the sender of an electronic mail

message?

A one-way ANOVA reveals no significant difference between levels of electronic mail experience (EXPUSE) and homophily. There was no significant difference between levels of general computer experience (CMPUSE) and homophily. Lastly, there was no significant difference between advanced computer experience (ADVUSE) and homophily.

Discussion

This study explored the idea that experienced users of electronic mail would perceive the sender of the electronic messages as attractive and homophilous, but not self-absorbed, while the inexperienced user would perceive the sender in the opposite manner. This contention was investigated because CMC offers limited cues to eliminate uncertainty in relationships, yet the medium supports highly personal and effective professional relationships.

When investigating how CMC relationships are maintained, one needs to evaluate the receivers' perceptions of the sender not just the sender's communication. Uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) suggests two perceptions to investigate, attraction and homophily, and previous research on CMC (Siegel, Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & McGuire, 1986; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986) offers a third, self-absorption. Using experience as an independent variable the results suggest (and power calculations support) no difference between experience with CMC and how attractive, homophilous, or self-absorbed the sender is perceived. Although these results are contrary to what was anticipated, two possible explanations are: (1) the environment may have affected perceptions and (2) the Ss may have perceived the sender in another unexpected social frame.

The environment in which the experiment was conducted may have affected the results of this research by being too stimulating. The Ss may have been so distracted by the free candy bar and the idea of electronic mail they may not have attended to the message enough to make an accurate perception of the

sender. So when the Ss got the questionnaire they may have only remembered the sender was a student and that the content of the message was interesting. Therefore, when asked to evaluate the sender's interpersonal perceptions, the Ss only remembered they liked their peers' idea and not that they used a self-absorbed communication style. Stated another way, the environment preempted the perception of a self-absorbed sender and lowered face validity of the self-absorption scale even though the message was designed to be exorbitantly self-absorbed.

The second explanation is that the Ss responded in a logical and appropriate manner. Within the scope of this research, it was assumed that the low experienced CMC user would attend to the elements of the message that would indicate a self-absorbed sender (i.e. many "I's", lack of salutation, and lack of closing) who would be perceived as unattractive and not homophilous. This assumption was made based on the premise that Ss would be functioning in a synchronous frame, that is, a frame where the norm of reciprocity has a distinct effect on people's perceptions (Gouldner, 1960). It was presumed that Ss would be functioning in a frame where reciprocity is expected and when none occurs a negative perception is generated. Instead the Ss may have adopted a frame where reciprocity is not expected and self-absorbed communication is accepted, similar to the one-sided communication expressed in a letter.

The results of this study indicate that Ss may have been operating in a frame where one-sided messaging is approved or even expected. Thus, what may have happened is that Ss with no prior experience with this medium adopted the appropriate frame in which to function. Therefore they perceived the sender of the message in a manner that was appropriate for the context.

Summary of Theoretical Implications

To summarize the theoretical implications of this research three areas are inspected: the conceptualization of the CMC context; language codes within the

medium and exterior to the medium are products of the CMC environment; and a typology for CMC.

The CMC context has been conceptualized from the standpoint of the creator of the message (Fowler & Wackerbarth, 1980; Hiemstra, 1982; Rice & Love, 1987; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Williams, 1978). The results of this study should push researchers to look into conceptualizing the CMC context from a receiver oriented perspective along with a sender perspective. When conceptualizing the CMC context one should note the lack of social context cues in CMC may not affect the receiver's perceptions of self-absorption in an expected manner.

Another implication revolves around language codes. The messages used in this endeavor were cluttered with "I's" and "me's'" and this did not seem to influence the receiver's interpersonal perceptions. This behavior follows Bernstein's (1971) idea that certain aspects of language structure and usage (i.e. personal pronouns) will not register as meaningful cues unless value is placed on this type of language use. Apparently, the self-absorbed structure of the message does not interfere with the receiver's perceptions of the sender.

A final theoretical implication revolves around McLuhan's (1964) idea that the medium is the message. It was originally proposed that electronic mail contextualized the message to the degree that the medium would actually add a layer of meaning to the message such that the medium would affect the interpersonal perceptions of the receiver of the message. Conceptually this makes sense because when we communicate using a specific medium we bring certain expectations into the communication situation via the context of the medium. For example, when face-to-face communication is the medium, all social context cues are available, so one expects the sender and receiver of the message to be aware of this fact and use them appropriately. If this expectation is violated, the message in this situation is altered. Thus, the cause of alteration is the medium chosen for communication, so the medium can be construed as the message.

In CMC there are few social context cues available to the sender and receiver, so when communication occurs they are not anticipating cues. It may be speculated that in CMC, the medium is not contextualizing the message because the medium operates in many communication contexts. One type of communication may broadcast general messages to many people, one context; another may solicit information and ideas from individuals or groups of people, two contexts; and another yet may develop and maintain all levels interpersonal relationships, multiple contexts.

If the medium is not contextualizing the message, what is? This researcher would posit that the message is contextualizing the message or modify McLuhan's (1964) terminology, the message is the message. This research offers some support to this claim because 250 Ss eliminated the self-absorption cues from their evaluation of the sender and used the message to evaluate the sender. Obviously this explanation needs to be tested with many different contexts and messages, but it does warrant investigation.

Future Research

Experience with the medium was found to have little effect on perceptions of homophily, attraction, and self-absorption in the present study. Because the medium offers few social context cues, the Ss may have made a logical leap into a frame where reciprocity and very self-oriented communication is accepted or even expected. Future research should address this issue of whether a logical leap was made and if so, how was this leap so easily made without any prior experience with the medium?

Future researchers ought replicate the present study in an organizational context to further investigate receivers' perceptions of senders. The natural organizational context will purge the limitations associated with artificial environments. Employees who have terminals on their desk should be sent a message and asked to respond to the message, then they should complete the

dependent measures. This would allow the interaction to be perceived as a normal event rather than a special opportunity, and offer qualitative as well as quantitative data on how the receiver is perceiving the sender.

Lastly, research should focus on what social context cues CMC receivers are perceiving. Interpersonal relationships are developed and maintained via CMC, there must be systematic cues that receivers focus on to formulate impressions. Determining what cues receivers center on will help CMC users portray accurate images of themselves. These images are important to the facilitation of the CMC users intended goals, thus allowing greater opportunity to satisfy the CMC user's goals.

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Appendix A

EXPERIENCE

The following are statements involving your experience with computers. Please indicate the degree to which you feel each statement applies to you. Please circle the appropriate response according to the code below, do not circle between responses.

5 = Regularly 2 = Rarely
4 = Fairly Often 1 = Never
3 = Occasionally

5	4	3	2	1	I use some function of a computer.
5	4	3	2	1	I use electronic mail.
5	4	3	2	1	I use the computer for word processing.
5	4	3	2	1	I contact people I do not know personally via electronic mail.
5	4	3	2	1	I use the computer to create programs.
5	4	3	2	1	I "meet" people via electronic mail.
5	4	3	2	1	I play games on a computer.
5	4	3	2	1	I write papers on a computer.
5	4	3	2	1	I turn on the computer just to check my electronic mail.
5	4	3	2	1	I enter data into a computer.
5	4	3	2	1	I feel comfortable using electronic mail.
5	4	3	2	1	I use a personal computer.
5	4	3	2	1	I have maintained personal relationships via electronic mail.

What college are you currently enrolled in? (i.e. A & S, Engineering, Business, etc.)

_____

What is your major? (If you are undecided as to what your major is please indicate TBD.)

_____

What year are you in school? (circle one) Fr Soph Jr Sr Grad

Are you male or female? Please circle appropriate response.

Male Female

Appendix B

SELF-ABSORPTION

The following are statements involving how you feel about the sender of the message you have just read. Please indicate the degree to which you feel each statement applies to him/her. It is important that you give your first impression of this person, although, you may not feel qualified to provide some of the information required of you. Please circle the appropriate response according to the code below, do not circle between responses.

SA= Strongly agree D = Disagree
A = Agree SD = Strongly disagree
? = Neutral

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message is concerned with the impression he/she is making on me.

SA A ? D SD The sender does not seem to care about how I perceive his/her message.

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message is concerned with me as a person.

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message thinks of himself/herself before anyone else.

SA A ? D SD The sender communicates only to satisfy his/her own personal needs.

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message is concerned about how I personally feel about him/her.

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message is only concerned with his/her own point of view.

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message has an inability to see another's perspective.

SA A ? D SD The sender of this message can see the difference between my point of view and his/her point of view.

Appendix C

Message Ia

I am a graduate student working on my master's thesis. I have been studying interpersonal relationships for two years. I think a key characteristic in any interpersonal relationship, whether it is a task, social, or private relationship, is the perception one partner has of the other. That is, I think one needs to be aware of the type of impression they are making on another in a relationship. I think that if one is aware of the perception the other individual has of oneself, there is a greater opportunity for a more functional and effective interpersonal relationship. An example is, if I recognized that you were socially attracted to me, I would not need to waste time and energy establishing this part of our relationship. I can assume that because you are socially attracted to me, we have that characteristic in common and you would be willing to interact with me socially without much effort on my part. This information would save me a lot of time and aid in developing our interpersonal relationship. This is one of my theories regarding interpersonal relationships. Before I can continue this line of research, I need you to take about 5 minutes and complete the questionnaire my assistant will give you.

Message IIa

Hello my name is Pat,

I am a graduate student working on my master's thesis. I have been studying interpersonal relationships for two years. I think a key characteristic in any interpersonal relationship, whether it is a task, social, or private relationship, is the perception one partner has of the other. That is, I think one needs to be aware of the type of impression they are making on another in a relationship.

I think that if one is aware of the perception the other individual has of oneself, there is a greater opportunity for a more functional and effective interpersonal relationship. An example is, if I recognized that you were socially attracted to me, I would not need to waste time and energy establishing this part of our relationship. I can assume that because you are socially attracted to me, we have that characteristic in common and you would be willing to interact with me socially without much effort on my part. This information would save me a lot of time and aid in developing our interpersonal relationship.

This is one of my theories regarding interpersonal relationships. Before I can continue this line of research I need you to take about 5 minutes and complete the questionnaire my assistant will give you.

Thank you,

Pat Smith

Appendix C

Message Ic

I am a graduate student working on my masters thesis. I have been studying computer mediated communication for two years. I really think that computer mediated communication is the wave of the future. Think of the possibilities. Communication would no longer be regulated by time, physical distance or status of the individual. I could go to class whenever I wanted without ever leaving my room. I could send messages to professors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I could communicate with my parents and friends anytime of the day whenever I wanted to. I could contact someone on the west coast as easily as contacting my roommate. If I wanted to complain about the food on campus I could contact the president of ARA as easily as the manager on duty. The possibilities go on and on, they seem endless at times. But before one can reap the benefits of this new medium I need to determine how people perceive senders of electronic messages. In order to do this I need you to take about 5 minutes and complete the questionnaire my assistant will give you.

Message IIc

Hello my name is Pat,

I am a graduate student working on my masters thesis. I have been studying computer mediated communication for two years. I really think that computer mediated communication is the wave of the future.

Think of the possibilities. Communication would no longer be regulated by time, physical distance or status of the individual. I could go to class whenever I wanted without ever leaving my room. I could send messages to professors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I could communicate with my parents and friends anytime of the day whenever I wanted to. I could contact someone on the west coast as easily as contacting my roommate. If I wanted to complain about the food on campus I could contact the president of ARA as easily as the manager on duty.

The possibilities go on and on, they seem endless at times. But before one can reap the benefits of this new medium I need to determine how people perceive senders of electronic messages. In order to do this I need you to take about 5 minutes and complete the questionnaire my assistant will give you.

Thank you,

Pat Smith